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AUTHOR	Arbona, Consuelo; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Designing university counseling services around variables that correlate with school success and help-seeking behavior might allow for better use of counseling resources. This study investigated whether noncognitive variables identified as being related to student success were predictive of whether black students and white students would seek help from a university counseling center and, if so, the type of help they would seek. The Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) measured the variables of: (1) positive self-concept; (2) realistic self-appraisal; (3) understanding and ability to deal with racism; (4) preference for long-term goals over short-term immediate needs; (5) availability of a strong support person; (6) successful leadership experience; (7) demonstrated community service; and (8) nontraditional knowledge acquired. The NCQ was administered to 2,990 incoming college freshmen. The results revealed that, for blacks, understanding racism, community service, low self-confidence, and a lack of long range goals were associated with their seeking help from the university counseling center. For whites, seeking help was related to having a strong support person, long range goals, and a more negative self-concept. The results also showed that the NCQ was related to which year in school students sought counseling and the type of counseling sought. Results varied by race. (Author/NB)

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Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

Noncognitive Variables in Predicting
Counseling Center Use by Race
Consuelo Arbona, William E. Sedlacek,
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Research Report # 3-57

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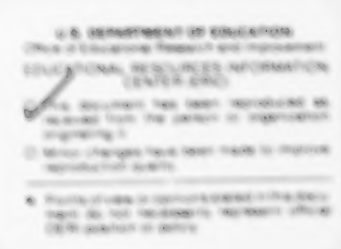

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COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES IN PREDICTING COUNSELING CENTER USE BY RACE

Consuelo Arbona, William E. Sedlacek, and Steven P. Carstens

Research Report # 3-87

Summary

2,990 students entering the University of Maryland, College Park were administered the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ). The NCQ was used to predict use of the Counseling Center and which service was used (Counseling Service versus Learning Assistance Center). For Black students, understanding racism, community service, low self-confidence and a lack of long range goals were associated with their coming to the Counseling Center. For White students, seeking help from the Counseling Center was related to having a strong support person, long range goals, and a more negative self-concept.

Results also showed that the NCQ was related to which year in school students sought counseling and the type of counseling sought. Results varied by race. The writers conclude that it is valuable to have a single set of variables which is associated with academic success and help seeking behavior.

It has been shown that Black students tend to make infrequent use of college and university counseling services (Bernard, 1965; Davis & Swarts, 1972; Leavitt, Carey, & Skeritz, 1977; Mackey, 1972; Russell, 1976; Ventress, 1970; Winer, Pasca, Dinello, & Weingarten, 1978). Research comparing Black and White student help-seeking behavior is scarce but consists mostly of: (1) types of problems perceived by students (Webster, Sedlacek, & Miyares, 1979; Westbrook, Miyares & Roberts, 1978), and (2) students' preferences for help giving sources (Gibbs, 1975, Johnson, 1977; Snyder, Hill & Derksen, 1972; Hummers & De Volder, 1979, Webster & Fretz, 1978). Also, while there are a few studies that have examined the differences between counseled and non-counseled students (Berdie & Stein, 1966; Meadows & Delke, 1963; Mendelsohn & Kirk, 1967; Sedlacek, Walters, & Valente, 1985), nearly all the subjects in these studies were White and the results were inconclusive.

In assessing problems perceived by minority and White students, Westbrook, Miyares, and Roberts, (1978) found that Black students on both Black and White campuses reported more problems in study skills, financial assistance and ethnic unity than White students. Similarly, Webster, Sedlacek, and Miyares, (1979) found that, on a predominantly White campus, Black students reported more problems related to racism and discrimination than White students. On the other hand, research on student help-seeking preferences has shown that the predisposition to seek out counseling services depends mostly on the type of problem. Students on both White and Black campuses consider educational and vocational problems more appropriate for counseling than

emotional-social concerns (Johnson, 1977; Snyder, Hill, and Derksen, 1972; Webster & Fretz, 1978). However, little is known about Black student characteristics that are predictive of their seeking help from university counseling services.

Sedlacek & Brooks (1976) proposed seven noncognitive variables that are related to student success: (1) positive self-concept, (2) realistic self-appraisal, (3) understanding and ability to deal with racism, (4) preference for long-term goals over short-term immediate needs, (5) availability of a strong support person, (6) successful leadership experience, and (7) demonstrated community service.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1984) devised a reliable and valid instrument, the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ), to measure the seven variables proposed by Sedlacek and Brooks, and an eighth variable labeled "nontraditional knowledge acquired." They found that the NCQ was predictive of college GPA for Black and White students over a four year period, and that these variables also predicted persistence in college for Black students (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984, 1985). In a later study Tracey and Sedlacek (1987) found that the NCQ was also predictive of graduation from college for both Blacks and Whites, but especially for Blacks. The Tracey and Sedlacek studies, as well as the research on types of problems perceived by students, clearly point out that the college experience and the variables related to student success do not seem to be the same for Black and White students.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether the noncognitive variables identified by Tracey and Sedlacek

(1984) were predictive of whether Black and White students seek help from a university counseling center, and the type of help they seek. Generally, researchers have not attempted to use a single set of variables to relate to both academic success and the use of counseling services. Designing counseling services around variables that correlate with school success and help-seeking behavior might allow for a better utilization of counseling resources.

Method

Sample and Procedures Random samples of two incoming freshman classes (1979-80 and 1980-81) at a large eastern university completed the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) as part of their summer orientation. Ninety percent of incoming freshmen typically attend summer orientation. There were 2,990 participants (2,465 Whites and 525 Blacks) in the study.

Instrument The NCQ consists of two categorical items on educational aspirations, 18 Likert-type items on expectations of college and self-assessment, and 3 open-ended items requesting information on present goals, past accomplishments and other activities. Tracey and Sedlacek (1984) found test-retest reliabilities for all items (2 week estimates ranging from .70 to .94 for each item, with a median value of .85).

Three judges rated the open-ended items for the following variables (interrater reliability estimates are presented in parentheses): long range goals (r=.88), academic relatedness of goals (r=.83), the degree of difficulty of listed accomplishments (r=.88), overall number of activities (r=1.00), leadership

(r=.98), and community involvement (r=.94). Tracey and Sedlacek (1984) found support for the construct validity of the MCQ on the eight noncognitive dimensions using factor analysis.

Analysis Stepwise discriminant analyses were conducted separately by race against the following criteria: (1) use of counseling center (any service) or not, (2) use of counseling services versus learning assistance services, and (3) use of services during a specific year in school through five years. Analyses were conducted separately for Blacks and Whites.

Results

Predicting Counseling Center Use Table 1 shows a summary of the discriminant analyses conducted on seeking help from the counseling center, including cross-validated canonical correlations and NCQ variables which were significant predictors for Blacks and Whites. These results show that the NCQ yielded significant ($p<.05$) predictors for Blacks and Whites. For Black students, the variables that most strongly predicted seeking help from the counseling center were understanding and dealing with racism, previous community service experiences, low self-confidence and a lack of long range goals. For White students, seeking help from the counseling center was related to having a strong support person as well as long range goals and a more negative self-concept.

Predicting Counseling Center Use by Year in School.

The relationship of the NCQ to seeking counseling center help during each college year was also examined for each race separately, using stepwise discriminant analyses. Data for the 1979 entrants were combined with data for the 1980 entrants. For

instance, criterion data from 1981 were used as third year data for the 1979 entrants and second year data for the 1980 entrants.

The canonical correlation coefficients of these two discriminant analyses are presented in Table 3. In these analyses the prediction was also better for Black students than for White students. As is shown in Table 4, the NCQ equation predicted group membership by year correctly for a higher percentage of Black students than White students.

The noncognitive variables that significantly added to the prediction of help-seeking behavior for each racial group by year in school are listed (in order of entry in the equation) in Table 5. More NCQ variables were found to be related consistently to seeking help throughout the college years for Black students than for White students.

For Black students, the absence of long range goals and having had community service experiences were related consistently to seeking help from the counseling center during the first four years of college. A negative self-concept was related to Black students seeking help during the first year of college, while a positive self-concept was related to their seeking help during the later college years. Being able to understand and deal with racism was predictive of Black students seeking help during their first year at the university.

For the White sample, there was not a consistent pattern of variables related to seeking help from the counseling center throughout the college years. Furthermore, the patterns that were found were somewhat contradictory. A negative self-concept

and having long range goals were related to White students seeking help from the counseling center during their first and fourth year of college. However, not having long range goals and having had positive leadership experiences were predictive of seeking help during the third college year.

Predicting Type of Counseling Center Service Used

To examine which NCQ variables were related to seeking help from the counseling services division (CS) versus the learning assistance services division (LAS), separate stepwise discriminant analyses were conducted on the two race samples. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 6. The prediction of type of service used based on the NCQ was better for Black than for White students. As is shown in Table 7, the NCQ equation predicted group membership correctly for a higher percentage of Black students than White students.

The noncognitive variables that significantly added to the prediction of type of service used for each racial group are listed (in order of entry in the equation) in Table 6. For Black students seeking help from the CS division (emotional-social and/or career counseling) versus the LAS division (study skills) was related to the lack of long range goals, a more negative self-concept and having had successful leadership experiences. Specifically, seeking help from the LAS was related to a lack of leadership experiences, high self-confidence and having long range goals.

For White students, a more positive self-concept and an understanding of racism were related to seeking help from the CS division versus the LAS division.

Discussion

The NCQ was related to use of the campus counseling center in a variety of ways which differred by race. Each of the eight noncognitive variables will be discussed in terms of its relationship to counseling center use by Black and White students.

Self-Concept

A lower self-concept was associated with both Black and White students coming to the counseling center in general. A lower self-concept was also associated with White students coming in to the center throughout their college years. This was true for Blacks only in their first year; in later years Blacks with more positive self-concepts were more likely to seek some form of counseling.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that a positive self-concept was correlated with higher grades and retention for Black and White students throughout their years in school. So here we have a potentially important difference between the correlates of success in school and who seeks counseling. Those with good self-concepts do well in school and those with poor self-concepts come in for counseling. However, Blacks with better self-concepts are more likely to seek counseling in their later years of college and to come in for learning assistance services. However Whites with more positive self-concepts are more likely to come in to the counseling service.

Thus, while the relationships among self-concept, academic success, seeking counseling services and race appear complex,

offering services which concentrate on improving self-concept could have an effect on students of both races. The effects could be improved academic performance and more successful counseling programs.

Long Range Goals

Blacks who have not developed long range goals seek counseling throughout their college years, particularly counseling services as opposed to learning assistance services. However, Whites who have developed long range goals are more likely to seek counseling throughout their time in college.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that having long range goals was associated with grades and retention in the early college years for Blacks, but only with grades in the early college years for Whites.

It would appear that services designed to assist in the development of long term goals could prove fruitful for Black students. Black students with problems in setting goals seek counseling, and previous research suggests that those with long range goals tend to stay in school and get better grades in the early college years. As with self-concept, students seeking counseling score low on a variable we know is positively related to success. Thus the service provider is in a good position to increase a student's chances for success.

Community Service

For Blacks, a high score on this variable is associated with seeking counseling services generally throughout their college years, but is not associated with use of counseling services for Whites.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that a positive score on community service was associated with grades and retention for Blacks and Whites, but particularly for Blacks. Thus, Blacks that come in for counseling tend to be high on this dimension already. Those Blacks who need help on community service may have to be recruited and appealed to in other ways. They are less likely to seek counseling on their own.

Understanding Racism

Blacks who understood racism were more likely to come in for counseling, particularly in their first year. This dimension was relevant for Whites only in their later college years, and Whites who understood racism were more likely to seek help with learning assistance.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found understanding racism to be important for Black student retention in later college years but it was not related to Black student grades. Understanding racism was not predictive of grades or retention for White students. Here is a variable that is predictive of who comes in for counseling, but again other devices must be employed to reach Black students who need help on working on racism since they are not likely to seek counseling. As with community service, one could use the understanding racism variable, on which the student is strong, as an example of how working on noncognitive variables such as self-concept or long range goals would be beneficial.

Leadership

Whites who exhibited leadership tended to seek counseling in their midddle college years. Leadership was not related to

whether Blacks sought counseling but those positive on leadership who did come in for counseling were more likely to go to the counseling service rather than the learning assistance service.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that leadership was related to grades in the early college years for Whites but was not related to grades for Blacks or retention for Blacks or Whites. The Leadership scale of the NCQ may be less useful than the other scales in uncovering ways to assist students through counseling.

Support Person

Whites with a support person tended to seek counseling particularly in their early college years. However, Blacks without a support person tended to seek counseling in their second year of college.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that having a support person was related to Black student retention in their early college years and was not related to retention for Whites or grades for either race. Here is a third variable (self-concept and long range goals being the others) on which low scoring Black students seek counseling where a high score is associated with their success. The counselor can provide the necessary support or refer students to other sources.

Realistic Self-Appraisal

Whites who were unrealistic in their appraisals sought counseling later in their college years. This variable did not relate to use of counseling services by Blacks.

Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that high realistic self-appraisal tended to be related to grades for Whites throughout their college years and retention in later years and related to

grades and retention for Blacks throughout their college years. This variable is important for college success but tells us little about who will seek counseling.

Nontraditional Knowledge Acquired

Blacks low on this variable come in for counseling in their fifth year and it did not relate to seeking counseling for Whites. Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found this variables related to grades and retention for Blacks and Whites in their later college years. This variable apears to have limited utility in predicting use of counseling services.

Conclusions

The NCQ appears to measure several student characteristics which are related to academic success and counseling services sought. The pattern of these relationships varies by race. If counseling can assist students in developing characteristics associated with success, this should improve their chances for success in school.

That there were consistent differences between races on the NCQ variables is a reminder that counseling services should be approached differently for different races. It is hoped that this article will provide one way of approaching those differences.

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Table 1

Summary of the Discriminant Analyses on Seeking Help from the Counseling Center

Sample	N	Canonical R*	Cross-Validated Canonical R**	Variables Entered
Black	425	.32	.28	SC (-), Rac (+) LRG (-), Comm (+)
White	1465	.16	.14	SC (-), Supp (+) LRG (+)

Abbreviations: SC = Self-concept, Rac = Understands and racism, LRG = Long range goals, Comm = Community service, Supp = Support person

*$p < .05$

** Cross-validated using 1979-80 entrant weights with 1980-81 entrants.

Table 2

Percent of Counseling Center Users Correctly Classified

Sample	N	Actual Center Users	Predicted Center Users	
		n	n	%
Black	425	97	62	64
White	1465	493	214	57

Table 3

Canonical Correlations for Discriminant Analyses on Using Counseling Center by Year in School

Year in School	Sample					
		Black			White	
	N	Canonical R	Cross-Validated Canonical R**	N	Canonical R	Cross-Validated Canonical R**
1	425	.30	.26*	2465	.14*	.12
2	444	.24	.20*	2465	.10*	.08
3	444	.31	.24*	2465	.08*	.04
4	444	.22	.19*	2465	.16*	.12
5	425	.25	.17*	2339	.12*	.09

*$p < .05$

** Cross-validated using 1979-80 entrant weights with 1980-81 entrants

Table 4

Percent of Counseling Center Users Correctly Classified by Year in School

Sample	Year in School	N	Actual Users	Predicted Users	
			n	n	%
Black	1	425	73	49	67
	2	444	18	10	56
	3	444	11	8	73
	4	444	7	6	86
	5	425	6	5	83
White	1	2465	270	155	57
	2	2465	137	74	54
	3	2465	108	64	59
	4	2465	78	51	65
	5	2339	30	23	77

Table 5

Noncognitive Variables that Significantly Added to the Prediction of Using Counseling Center by Year in School

Year in School	Black	White
1	Race (+), SC (-)	SC (-), LRG (+)
	LRG (-)	Supp (+)
2	Comm (+), Supp (-)	Supp (+)
3	LRG (-), SC (+)	Lead (+), LRG (+)
	Comm (+)	
4	LRG (-), Comm (+)	SC (-), LRG (+)
5	NTK (-), SCC (+)	RSA (-), RAC (+)

Abbrevations: Rac = Understands racism, SC = Self-concept, LRG = Long range goals, Supp = Support person, Comm = Community service, Lead = Leadership, NTK = Nontraditional knowledge, RSA = Realistic self-appraisal

Table 6

Summary of Discriminant Analyses on Seeking Help from the Counseling Service Division[1]

Sample	N	Canonical R	Cross-Validated Canonical R**	Varibales Entered
Black	89	.52*	.43	LRG (-), SC (-)
White	445	.24*	.17	Rac (-), SC (+)

[1] As compared to the Learning Assistance Division.

Abbreviations: LRG = Long range goals, SC = Self-concept, Lead = Leadership, Rac = Understands racism.

* $p < .05$

** Cross-validated using 1979-80 entrant weights with 1980-81 entrants

Table 7

Percent of Grouped Cases Correctly Classified by Type of Counseling Center Service Used

Sample	CS	LAS		CS		LAS
	n	n	n	%	n	%
Black	41	48	28	68	33	69
White	189	256	109	64	147	57

Abbreviations: CS = Counseling services, LAS = Learning assistance service